

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20554

In the Matter of)	
Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Mechanism)	CC Docket No. 02-6
Connect America Fund)	WC Docket No. 10-90
Modernizing the E-rate Program for Schools and Libraries)	WC Docket No. 13-184

To: The Commission

REPLY COMMENTS OF T-MOBILE USA, INC.

T-Mobile USA, Inc. (“T-Mobile”)¹ submits this reply to the comments filed in response to the Wireline Competition Bureau’s (“Bureau”) Public Notice² seeking comment on two petitions³ requesting that the Commission allow E-rate subsidized broadband networks to be accessed by students at home for educational purposes without any obligation by the E-rate applicant to cost-allocate the portion of the traffic attributable to off-campus use.

¹ T-Mobile USA, Inc. is a wholly-owned subsidiary of T-Mobile US, Inc., a publicly traded company.

² *Wireline Competition Bureau Seeks Comment On Petitions Regarding Off-Campus Use Of Existing E-Rate Supported Connectivity*, Public Notice, CC Docket No. 02-6, WC Docket 10-90, WC Docket No. 13-184 (rel. Sept. 19, 2016) (“Public Notice”), https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-16-1051A1.pdf.

³ *Microsoft Corporation, Mid-Atlantic Broadband Communities Corporation (MBC), Charlotte County Public Schools, Halifax County Public Schools, GCR Company, and Kinex Telecom Joint Petition for Clarification or, in the alternative, Waiver of Microsoft Corporation, Mid-Atlantic Broadband Communities Corporation, Charlotte County Public Schools, Halifax County Public Schools, GCR Company, and Kinex Telecom*, WC Docket No. 13-184 (filed Jul 7, 2016), <https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/60002098542.pdf> (“Microsoft Petition”); *Petition for Waiver of Samuelson-Glushko Technology Law & Policy Clinic on Behalf of Boulder Valley School District*, WC Docket Nos. 13-184, 10-90 (filed May 16, 2016), <https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/60001843683.pdf> (“Boulder Valley Petition”) (collectively, “Petitions”).

Most commenters support the Petitions as examples of the conceptual need to allow E-rate to fund off-campus broadband for educational purposes. No commenter, however, refuted T-Mobile’s fundamental point that allowing E-rate support for commercial mobile broadband for off-campus educational use would be more effective than either of these Petitions at addressing the Homework Gap.

The record clearly reinforces the gravity of the Homework Gap, and the potential for E-rate to be an important tool to address it. For example, the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) cites a report it released in September 2016 demonstrating the need for students to have Internet access not just at school but at home and “everywhere else in the community.”⁴ On that basis, SEDTA states that it “strongly supports the *goals of* the Boulder Valley School District and Microsoft Corporation petitions” and that the “petitioners should be applauded for their desire to close the ‘home work gap’ by serving low-income students.”⁵

Similarly, Sprint cites data about the severity of the Homework Gap and points to its own work to extend mobile broadband to low-income students.⁶ Like T-Mobile, “Sprint has long argued that wireless services used for educational purposes outside of school should be eligible for full E-rate support.”⁷

⁴ SEDTA Comments at 1, citing SEDTA, *The Broadband Imperative II: Equitable Access for Learning* (Sept. 2016). Unless otherwise noted, references herein to parties “Comments” refer to initial comments in response to the Public Notice filed on or about November 3, 2016.

⁵ *Id.* at 1 (emphasis added).

⁶ Sprint Comments at 2.

⁷ *Id.* at 2-3.

The VON Coalition, too, discusses how the “absence of internet access is felt acutely by children whose academic performance often depends on – indeed assumes – access to the internet, but who lack the ability to secure access on their own.”⁸

While these and other commenters support the grant of the Petitions, they in no way dispel T-Mobile’s concern that, if the Commission is going to permit the use of E-rate funding for Internet access for educational use outside of school, the Petitions are not the best way to do so.⁹ As T-Mobile observed, mobile broadband services are more cost-effective than the services in either of the Petitions. Mobile broadband also is available across a much wider geography and to a larger number of potential students than the services in either Petition. As Funds for Learning observes, “[w]hat the petitioners are essentially proposing is a logical, long overdue extension of the E-rate program’s 2010 Community Use rules,” and urged the Commission to “adopt the changes and/or clarifications being proposed with even greater enthusiasm” – i.e., beyond the narrow context of these two Petitions.¹⁰

⁸ VON Coalition Comments at 2.

⁹ T-Mobile Comments at 9-15.

¹⁰ Funds for Learning comments at 1-2.

In sum, the record demonstrates that there is a compelling need to allow E-rate to fund broadband for educational purposes outside of school, but that these Petitions are unnecessarily narrow and limited vehicles to do so. Instead, the Commission should waive, forbear from, or modify its rules to allow E-rate to support mobile broadband – which is ubiquitously available and affordable – for educational purposes outside of school.

Respectfully submitted,

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